



Planning a Great Decision-making Meeting

Why go this route?

- Because you want to hold effective and efficient meetings.
- Because you want to choose the best decision-making method.
- Because you want to involve all of the necessary stakeholders.
- Because you want to use limited time effectively and efficiently.
- Because you want to engage all members of the team in making the decision.
- Because you want to positively impact student achievement.

You'll know you've arrived when...

- Pre-planning time is set aside... and used.
- All members of the team are clear on the mission of the meeting.
- Members of the team understand the impact this decision will have on student achievement.
- Members of the team participate in the meeting.
- The team stays focused on the decision/task at hand.
- The objective of the meeting was met.
- All members of the team will support the decision.
- The decision is aligned to your School Improvement Plan, School Mission and the goals and objectives of your school.

Construction Zone

- Prepare, prepare, prepare! Clarify in advance the decision and how it will impact student achievement.
- Make sure you have the input and resources you need, and the team has the agenda and materials in time to come prepared.
- Ensure that you've identified the diverse voices that need to be heard for a good decision.



It's about **TIME**

- 1-2 hours for preplanning




Potential **COSTS**

- Copies
- Snacks (if desired)

The Process

*A step-by-step guide
to planning decision-
making meetings for
maximum impact*

NOTE: Steps marked with a  are accompanied by one or more inserts, included in this packet.

1 Determine the decision that is to be made. Clarify the outcome you need from the meeting.

INSERTS A and B for Step 1 suggest ideas to keep in mind.

2 Determine who should make the decision.

The group should have access to the voices of each stakeholder group that will be impacted by the decision—teachers, parents, students, para-professionals, cooks, custodians, recess aides, administrators. Look for a group whose “charter” either includes all stakeholders, or includes the responsibility to gather and honor their input. If no such group exists, convene one. See MI-Map Packet 8:1 “Setting Up Shared Decision-making Teams” for a sample “charter” that clarifies the group’s responsibilities.

3 Decide the roles participants will play in the meeting.

For instance, will the group need a convenor, notetaker, timekeeper, facilitator, process observer?

4 Determine how decisions will be made.

INSERTS A and B for Step 4 suggest a range of options and criteria for deciding which option best fits your situation.

5 Determine what information or opinions are needed prior to the meeting, in order for the participants to do their work.

You may need to survey stakeholders who are not part of the team, formally or informally. Distribute any requests for information well in advance and include a date by which responses should be returned.

6 Prepare an agenda and distribute it in advance to participants and stakeholders.

INSERT for Step 6 is a sample agenda that you can modify to meet your needs.

7 At the meeting ensure that participants

- are introduced, including information about their roles.
- understand ground rules for the meeting. (See INSERT A for Step 7)
- hear any input from stakeholders not present.
- understand and follow the decision-making method that applies.
- plan how to communicate the decision (and rationale) to stakeholders.
Remember that you can publish or post a newsletter or report
- evaluate the effectiveness of the meeting.

Getting more mileage from planning for effective meetings

How planning for decision-making meetings benefits your school in regard to the following initiatives:

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

- Schools making good decisions about student achievement will move forward toward Adequate Yearly Progress.
- To meet the accountability standards of NCLB, schools must include all stakeholders in effective decision-making.

Education YES!

- Michigan's EducationYES! raises the bar for achievement of all students at all levels. Many difficult decisions will need to be made by groups of diverse stakeholders in order to do this.

MI-Plan

- Step 1, pages 9 and 10, Decision-making Process Template and Example of Michigan Decision-making Model. This model template is available to analyze and develop the school improvement decision-making process. The model includes an outline of: decisions by consensus, participatory decision-making guidelines, membership, terms, tasks and meetings.



Resources

Books

Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In

Roger Fisher and William Ury. New York: Viking Press, 1991.

This practical, positive book is about how to look below seeming disagreements to find what shared interests exist, so that the two sides can cooperate in finding creative ways past their disagreement.

"The Wisdom of Teams"

Jon Katzenbach and Douglas Smith. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc, 1993.

The authors dismiss touchy-feely "pseudo-teams" in favor of productive, focused ones who gel because they face together a specific, outcome-defined challenge.

People

Specialists

Most Intermediate School Districts have a specialist working with schools on School Improvement in their service areas.

Coaches

The *Alliance for Building Capacity in Schools* website lists coaches whose training has been provided by Michigan State University and supported by the Michigan Department of Education. Some are active in working with team process in Michigan schools. Please visit:

www.abcscoaches.org

Primary Author for this MI-Map Packet

Jan Oord
Partner Educator
Office of School Improvement

MI-Map Coordinator/Editor

Joann Neuroth
Changing Horses
neurothj@aol.com

For more information, contact

Office of School Improvement
Michigan Department of Education
517/241-4285

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